

THEOLOGICAL UNION
OF
MOUNT ALLISON WESLEYAN COLLEGE.

FIFTH
ANNUAL LECTURE
AND
SERMON.

DELIVERED JUNE, 1883.

SAINT JOHN, N. B.
J. & A. McMILLAN, 98 PRINCE WILLIAM STREET,
1883.

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MIRACLES:

BEING THE

FIFTH ANNUAL LECTURE BEFORE THE THEOLOGICAL UNION OF
MOUNT ALLISON WESLEYAN COLLEGE.

BY

REV. CRANSWICK JOST, M. A.

DELIVERED JUNE, 1883.

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MIRACLES.

MIRACLES, in the broad use of the term, are methods in which God holds intercourse with man, outside of the general constitution and course of material things.

They are conveniently distinguished in theology as the miracle absolute, or, the work-miracle; the miracle of prophecy, or, the word-miracle; the miracle of inspiration, or, the book-miracle; miracles of grace; and providential miracles,—all of which are corollaries of the grandest of God's works, the miracle of human redemption.

These various methods of Divine intervention in the affairs of men have elements in common, which justify their classification under this one generic term.

They are all supernatural. They all imply the activity of God in ways distinct from the system of cause and effect represented by the laws of nature. They are all the result of the operation, in the interests of redemption, of the laws of the spiritual life. They all stand or fall together, with the belief in a personal God, the Author of nature and of revelation.

More definitely, and without any qualifying word, the term in question is applied to a particular department of these supernatural exhibitions of Divine interest in human affairs; namely, to the work-miracles, by which God, at sundry times, has authenticated His messengers to man,—the greatest of which centre in the person and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, while we apply this name to these supernatural works themselves, it must be carefully observed—as Mozley very clearly shows—that the material fact in the miracle does not of itself constitute the miracle, but, “the material fact as coinciding with an express announcement, or, with express supernatural pretensions in the agent. It is the correspondence of two facts which

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constitutes a miracle. If a person says to a blind man, 'See,' and he sees, it is not the sudden return of sight alone that we have to account for, but, its return at that particular moment. For, it is morally impossible that this exact agreement of an event with a command or notification could have been by mere chance, or, as we should say, been an extraordinary coincidence, especially if it is repeated in other cases."¹

The system of nature and that of the supernatural, which are thus introduced to our notice, are not rival systems. It is unfortunate that some foundation has been unintentionally given to the supposition of their mutual antagonism by definitions which have long obtained currency in theology.

Miracles have been defined as "violations" of the laws of nature. And, against this idea that God arbitrarily "violates" a law which He has himself appointed for a beneficent purpose, the shafts of unbelievers have, not altogether unjustly, been hurled. But, if it is shown, as we believe it can be, that miracles do not "violate" the laws of nature, then these shafts fail of their intended mark.

If secondary causes which have hitherto been productive of a certain definite result, were now to produce an opposite result, that would be a "violation" of a law of nature. But, a miracle is not the result of such contradiction in the operation of secondary causes. A stream of water flowing onward to the sea is arrested in its course and confined to the narrow limits of its channel by the diminution of the temperature. But, that effect is not a violation of the law of gravitation. The law of gravitation remains the same. That effect is produced by the subordination of the law of gravitation, in the particular instance, to the law of heat and cold. In like manner, miracles are the result of the subordination, in particular instances, of the laws of material nature to the higher laws of the spiritual world, by the Great First Cause, who fulfils His high designs through the agency of secondary causes, or by direct volition.

In the world of nature there is an ascending scale of exist-

¹ Mozley "On Miracles," page 118.

ence from the mineral to man, and a corresponding ascending scale of law. There is also a constant subordination of lower law to higher law. The laws of unorganized matter are subordinated to the laws of organized matter; the laws of vegetable life to the laws of animal life. Man, at the head of the animal world, subordinates to the uses of his physical and mental nature the laws of the existences beneath him. But, man has also a spiritual nature by which he is allied to the spirit-world; and as in the moral government of God a sentient spirit outweighs in value an insentient world, analogy leads us to believe that the ascending scale of law will rise still higher, and that the lower laws of nature will be subordinated, as occasion may require, to the higher laws and uses of spiritual life and being.

Having thus pointed out what I believe to be the relation which miracles sustain to the other forms of supernatural agency which are sometimes designated by the same general name; and also their relation to the laws of nature, I invite your attention to two propositions, which it will be my aim in the present discussion to establish, viz. :

1st. *That miracles are possible, in opposition to the dogmas of naturalism and materialism; and,*

2ndly. *That they are the necessary credentials of revelation, and are in harmony with the beneficent purposes of God in the general course of nature and in the greater work of redemption.*

I. The ground of the possibility of miracles is the existence of God, the personal, Omnipotent Creator and Moral Governor of the universe.

1. The real question in dispute, therefore, between those who believe that miracles have been performed, as credentials of revelation, and those who deny their possibility, is the question of the existence of One whose perfections are such as are ascribed to the God of the Bible. If no such Being exists, miracles are impossible: if such a Being does exist, His goodness and omnipotence are a guarantee of their possibility.

This issue is fairly put before us by the opening sentence of the Bible, and, is kept before us by every sacred page. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen. i. 1.) Either the heavens and the earth have existed from eternity, or, they have not existed from eternity. If they have, the statement in Genesis is untrue; if they have not, they must be either the offspring of chance,—an absurdity which modern naturalism does not affirm,—or, they must be the product of an intelligent Creator, and the statement of Genesis is true.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (Gen. ii. 7.) Either man is the product of a special Divine creation, or, he is not. If the affirmative is the fact, the statement of Genesis is true; but, if the negative is the fact, the statement of Genesis is false.

Whoever accepts the foregoing testimony to the creation of the heavens and the earth, and to the special creation of man, admits the existence of a Being who is competent to the performance of all the miracles of the Bible, and admits also the exercise of His omnipotence in methods not included in the general course of nature. Logically, therefore, he must be ready, at the least, to give attention to the argument in support of subsequent special manifestations of the same Supreme power.

2. Who are the objectors, and what are their objections to the plain and consistent scriptural narratives of the supernatural?

The modern opponents of miracles are of two classes.

To the first class belongs the so-called historico-critical school, including the Tübingen critics, with Strauss and Renan, and their followers. They are the disciples of the Hegelian, or, Positive philosophy, whose corner-stone is naturalism. They are, therefore, at the outset of their Biblical investigations committed to the impossibility of miracles, and, of the whole range of supernatural facts and experiences which the Bible reveals. When they use Biblical terms, they attach to them an unbiblical meaning. Their God is a pantheistic abstraction, the mere personifi-

creation of ideal perfections; an imaginary being, having a place and a use in philosophy only as abstract ideas in general have, such, for example, as those of power, and beauty, and sublimity.

Godet classifies the opinions upon the miracles of the different writers of this school as follows, viz., the natural explanation, the mythical hypothesis, the relative hypothesis, and the psychological hypothesis.¹

(1.) The natural explanation professes to accept the record, but, believes it to be highly idealized, and, in need of being toned down in order to express the reality. When the toning-down process is completed, the supernatural is obliterated, and only a so-called residuum of natural fact remains.

(2.) The mythical hypothesis regards the miracle as the creation of the Christian imagination. Around a nucleus of fact there has gathered, in the progress of years, a halo of the supernatural which it is the duty of the critic to disperse.

(3.) The relative hypothesis regards the miracles as the results of the operation of laws of nature at present unknown. Hereafter, it may be, some Newton will arise to discover these laws; and then the miracles will take their place under them, as natural facts; just as the falling of an apple takes its place under the law of gravitation.

(4.) The psychological hypothesis comes in to supplement the others, and complete the destruction of the supernatural which they have begun. Any of the miracles which do not vanish at the touch of the other hypotheses, are explained as the results produced upon the nervous system of the sick and suffering by one who possesses the strong magnetism of a finely organized nature.

The second class of objectors is under the leadership of a few well-known scientists, who, whatever honor they deserve for the discovery and brilliant illustration of scientific facts, have, nevertheless, done violence to the cause of truth by the advocacy of theories which the facts of science do not authorize.

¹ Godet's Com. on the Gospel of St. Luke. Funk & Co.'s "Standard Series," Vol. I., page 162.

Some writers of this class directly deny the existence of the supernatural; others, while not joining openly in this denial, advocate opinions which are equivalent to such a denial. Some plainly declare their belief of materialism; others reject the charge of materialism, though many of their statements are a distinct substantiation of the charge. Speaking generally, their philosophy is that of phenomenalism, or, agnosticism.

Now, it will be seen that these two classes of objectors are virtually one. For, whether the position taken be that of a direct denial of the supernatural, or, that of opinions the admission of which excludes the supernatural, the result is substantially the same.

It is not in my present plan to make a distinct application to the miracles of the four hypotheses of the first-named school. That application will be sufficiently evident as we proceed. It is enough to say at present that neither of these hypotheses affords an explanation of any of the miracles of the New Testament which does not impeach the moral character and motives of Jesus and the Evangelists; and, when they come to deal with the great miracle of the resurrection of Jesus, they attempt a task in which their incompetency becomes glaringly apparent.

I wish to call special attention to the assumption upon which both these schools of objectors base their theories, viz., the denial, explicit, or, agnostic, of the supernatural.

3. But, we will first listen to their own words, in proof of the opinions which I have here attributed to them.

Strauss advocates the mythical origin of miracles, but, finding that hypothesis tottering under the blows of the defenders of the supernatural, he joins hands with scientific materialism. "Vainly," he says, "did we, philosophers and critical theologians, over and over again, decree the extermination of miracles. Our ineffectual sentence died away, because we could neither dispense with miraculous agency, nor point to any natural force able to supply it where it had hitherto seemed most indispensable. Darwin has demonstrated this force, this process of nature; he

has opened a door by which a happier coming race will cast out miracles, never to return. Every one who knows what miracles imply will praise him, in consequence, as one of the greatest benefactors of the human race."¹

But Strauss, in this bold avowal, begs the question. He assumes that Darwinism has actually discovered, or is on the sure road to discover, the "missing link" which is to demonstrate the fallacy of the supernatural; an opinion which, judged at the tribunal of the established facts of science, is as baseless as his own mythical hypothesis.

Renan says, "Miracles of every sort are only the unexplained."² "The historical sciences presuppose that no supernatural agency disturbs the course of humanity; that there is no being superior to man, to whom one can attribute an appreciable part in the moral conduct, more than in the material conduct of the universe. For myself, I think that there is not in the universe an intelligence superior to man; that the absolute of justice and reason manifests itself only in humanity. Viewed outside of humanity, this absolute is only an abstraction."³

Tyndall says, "The human mind is a musical instrument with a certain range of notes, beyond which is an infinitude of silence." He assumes that no supernatural voice has broken that infinitude of silence. Again, in the plain language of materialism, "Not alone the mechanism of the human body, but that of the human mind itself, emotion, intellect, will, and all their phenomena, were once latent in a fiery cloud."⁴

Huxley says, "The day-fly has better grounds for calling a thunder-storm supernatural, than man has, with his infinitesimal fraction of duration, to say that the most astonishing event which can be imagined is beyond the scope of natural causes."⁵ As surely as every future grows out of the past and present, so will the physiology of the future gradually extend the realm of matter

¹ "The Old Faith and the New." Vol I., page 205.

² "Vie de Jésus." Introduction, page 42.

³ Quoted by Pressensé: "Jésus Christ," Sa Vie, page 12.

⁴ Belfast "Address."

⁵ "Hume," page 130.

and law, until it is coextensive with knowledge, with feeling, with action."¹ Again: "What justification is there, then, for the assumption of the existence in the living matter of a something which has no representative, or correlative, in the not-living matter which gave rise to it?"²

Dr. Maudsley says, "Every phenomenon of mind is the result, as manifest energy, of some change, molecular, chemical, or vital, in the nervous elements of the brain."³ He maintains that "mind is a metaphysical abstraction" which "has been made into a spiritual entity, and a complete barrier thereby imposed in the way of positive investigation."

Virchow says, "The scientific naturalist knows only bodies and the properties of bodies;" and affirms that all besides body is "transcendental, and the transcendental is the chimerical."⁴

Frederic Harrison says, "The combined activity of the human powers, organized around the highest of them, we call the soul." Again: "The consensus of human faculties, which we call soul, comprises all sides of human nature according to one homogeneous theory."⁵

Herbert Spencer attempts the task of systematizing this materialism in his "New Philosophy," which postulates that all forces, physical, chemical, vital, mental, and moral, are one and correlative. That assumption fixes the boundary of human knowledge, according to the Spencerian philosophy; beyond that are the dreary depths of agnosticism.

4. When statements such as the foregoing come to us in the name of science and philosophy; when these disciples of naturalism and materialism thus explicitly, or, by agnostic implication, deny the supernatural, or, as it has been said, "starve it out and dissipate it into a technical abstraction;" when they thus seek to undermine the system of morals and religion which has its foundation in the perfections of the living and true God, who has by means of miracles authenticated the revelation of His will to

¹ Lay Sermons, page 156. ² Do., page 149.

³ See Hodge's "Systematic Theology," Vol. I., page 275.

⁴ Quoted by Hodge, Vol. I., page 275. ⁵ "The Soul and Future Life."

man, it is natural for us to ask,—What do they put in the place of revelation to meet the moral wants and cravings of man? For, such moral wants and cravings they must confess that man possesses, though they deny to him a spiritual, as distinct from a physical nature.

One would think that they would at once throw away the Gospels, because, upon every page, they portray the supernatural; because, as Dr. Taylor remarks, "The miracles are the web and the discourses and other incidents are the woof of a history, whose unity is constituted by the interweaving of the two, and the removal of either is the destruction of the web."¹

But, no; they do not do that. They essay the impossible task of harmonizing the Gospels with their anti-supernaturalism, and hand us back, as the result, a system whose authors are acknowledged frauds, a system which every man's sense of right and truth must instinctively reject.

Strauss says, "The supernatural birth of Christ, his miracles, his resurrection, his ascension, remain eternal truths, whatever doubt may be cast upon their reality as historic facts."² To which we reply, if these supernatural narratives are not historic facts, they are not eternal truths; they are rather to be eternally stigmatized as falsehoods; and a moral system based upon such falsehoods must itself be false, and incompetent to guide man into the true and the right. Strauss himself acknowledges this incompetency; for, after stating that in the study of history, and natural science and poetry, and in the performances of the great musicians, he finds "a stimulus for the intellect and heart, for wit and imagination, which leaves nothing to be desired," he proceeds to extol music and poetry as vastly superior to the Bible for the purpose of culture and comfort. And certainly they are superior to the Bible he would leave us,—a Bible from which the supernatural is effaced, a book of myths and falsehoods!

In the same spirit, Renan eloquently declares Jesus to be "the individual who has approached nearest the Divine," and "the Creator of the eternal religion of morality." Yet, he

¹ "The Gospel Miracles," etc., page 6.

² *Life of Jesus*: Preface, page 4.

charges Jesus with the basest artifice and fraud. Indeed, he says, "There never was a great religious creation which did not imply a little of what people call fraud." His explanation of the resurrection of Lazarus is, that it was a mock miracle; that Martha and Mary, desirous that Jesus should obtain a wider notoriety, deceitfully hid their living brother in the sepulchre, and that Jesus, knowing him to be alive, and consenting to the fraud, came and commanded the living Lazarus to come forth! Dr. McCosh remarks that Renan, after having allowed his book to pass through twelve editions with this slander, changes his interpretation of the miracle; but, the new interpretation is no more satisfactory, or creditable to "the Creator of the eternal religion of morality" than the old.¹

To such contradictory and calumnious utterances are they driven who deny the supernatural in the life and works of Jesus! And, remember, this is the highest result to which anti-supernaturalism has attained in formulating a science of morals; this is the "railway," which, according to Strauss, Darwinism is preparing, by which the human race, delivered from the tyranny of the supernatural, is to be borne "*where* the flags are fluttering joyfully in the breeze!"²

But, Strauss fails to give to that "*where*" a local habitation or a name. Cautious people will fear lest it be "the antipodes of heaven," over which floats the black flag of eternal despair.

Tyndall sometimes shrinks from that "*where*." In the preface to the expurgated edition of his Belfast Address, he says, "I have noticed, during years of self-observation, that it is not in hours of clearness and vigor that this doctrine (of materialism) commends itself to my mind; that in the presence of stronger and healthier thought it ever dissolves and disappears, as offering no solution of the mystery in which we dwell, and of which we form a part." And, in the body of that Address, he adds, in language which the believer in the supernatural can heartily endorse, "You cannot satisfy the human understanding in its

¹ McCosh's "Christianity and Positivism," pages 247, 253.

² "The Old Faith and the New." Vol. I., page 205.

demand for logical continuity between molecular processes and the phenomena of consciousness. This is the rock on which materialism must inevitably split whenever it pretends to be a complete philosophy of life."¹

5. The issue is now before us. Where will we take our stand? Will we join the schools of naturalism and materialism, denying all supernatural existence, and the whole system of supernatural facts and experiences which the Scriptures reveal? For, the assumptions of these schools of thought are alike fatal to every form of supernatural being and activity. The impossibility of the work-miracle involves the impossibility of prophecy and inspiration, and redemption; it makes the new birth a fiction; it makes prayer—in the language of Bushnell—only a dumb-bell exercise;"² and then follow, in due order, the materializing of mind, and the placing of man at the apex of being.

Or, will we take our stand on the platform of revelation, which admits a spiritual nature in man, allying him to other orders of spiritual being, over whom is the infinite and eternal Spirit; and supernatural phenomena, mingling with the phenomena of nature,—which admission satisfactorily explains the mystery of the origin of life, and harmonizes the facts of human consciousness with all the established facts of science?

6. It is a remark of Mozley, that "no one is ever convinced by external evidence only; there must be a certain probability in the fact itself, or, a certain admissibility in it, which must join on to the external evidence for it, in order for that evidence to produce conviction."³

The remark applies equally to all science, physical, metaphysical, and moral.

In the science of mathematics, there are certain fundamental principles which lie at the basis of all investigation. These fundamental principles, of which the axioms are examples, are not the result of previous processes of reasoning. They are admitted

¹ Belfast "Address," p. 33.

² "Nature and The Supernatural," p. 317.

³ "On Miracles:" Preface to third edition, page 24.

to be necessary truths upon the simple statement of them, and no elaborate argument can make them clearer to the mental comprehension. If one should deny these axioms, he is stopped at the very threshold of the science; there can, indeed, be no science of mathematics to him; but, admitting them as the data of consciousness, he advances step by step, with conviction at every step, until he reaches the summit of assured demonstration.

In metaphysics, also, there are certain primary truths which argument cannot demonstrate, and of which we can give no better reason than that we know them to be truths, and that the denial of them involves us in endless absurdities. Our personal existence, our personal identity, the impossibility of an effect without a cause,—these and kindred truths are not the product of research, are not derived from experience, are not proved by syllogistic reasoning. In the ultimate analysis we can only say that they are constituent parts of the mental nature with which we are endowed. We have had the experiment of philosophers beginning their researches in the domain of mind, if not with a denial of these intuitions, at least with an agnostic purpose to admit nothing for truth which could not be made to stand in the conclusion of a syllogism; and the result, as recorded upon the pages of history, is an inextricable confusion of the subjective and objective, a blind labyrinth in which the philosophers themselves were lost.

In like manner, there are, in the sphere of morals, ultimate and elementary principles, innate ideas, which spring up intuitively in the mind, along with those of which we have been speaking, when the mind is awakened to activity by the contact of the external world. The essential distinction between right and wrong, the obligation of virtue, personal responsibility for character and conduct, and the existence of an intelligent, moral Governor of the world,—these are fundamental convictions of the mind, inwrought in the constitution of our nature, upon which the very existence of a moral nature depends, and which must be true, unless our nature be a lie. And, if our nature is a lie, the whole universe must be, as Sir William Hamilton says, “a dream of a dream.”

Philosophy tests the innate ideas by the criteria of universality and necessity. Apply these criteria to the idea of God, and it stands the test.

(1.) The idea of God is universal. History proves its universality. Man, under all circumstances of race, or clime, or enlightenment, is a religious being. This is as truly predicated of him as that he is a social being. The religious instinct has been the occasion of the mightiest movements in human history. And, the testimony of the human mind, unbiased by a false philosophy, is not to the fate-god of the heathen sages, or the dream-god of Buddhism, or the impersonal, pantheistic god of naturalism, or the force-god of materialism, but to a living God, an object of intelligent worship, interested in the affairs of the world, exercising an effective Governorship over it, and propitiated by prayer, penitence, and sacrifice.

(2.) The idea of God is necessary. No man can satisfy his nature without some supreme object of reverence and worship. If he dethrones the true God, he sets up a false god. Positivism has its god. According to Comte, "*Le Nouveau Etre Suprême*," is humanity. Renan, who, as we have seen, declares that in his belief there is no being superior to man, and so shuts out a spirit-world, nevertheless appeals to the "pure soul" of his departed sister—to whose memory he dedicates his "*Life of Jesus*"—"to reveal to him, from the bosom of God in which she rests, those truths which are mightier than death, and take away the fear of death."

The necessity of the idea of God is seen also in the fact that, as in the case of all the innate ideas, the alternative is an absurdity. Manicheism, and other systems of a former age, maintained the eternity of matter. But, this ancient stronghold has been abandoned. Hume admits this. He says, "That impious maxim of ancient philosophy, '*ex nihilo nihil fit*,' by which the creation of matter was excluded, ceases to be a maxim according to this philosophy."¹ The supposition of the eternity of matter being laid aside, there remains to account for the origin of the

¹ Quoted by Mozley, page 87.

universe, with its order and design, an intelligent Creator, or, blind, unintelligent chance. But, to suppose that chance could originate a world like ours, whose movements are directed by wise laws, and fill it with innumerable evidences of contrivance and adaptation of means to ends, before which the highest human intelligence, itself, according to the supposition, a work of chance, stands amazed, is so clearly absurd, that it can only obtain a hearing when it is disguised under some high-sounding scientific name; which name, be it natural selection, or evolution, or the correlation of forces, is made to do a double service, namely, to account for and explain some natural phenomena, and then, by the fallacy of a non-distributed term, to account for and explain all the phenomena of the universe.

When it is affirmed that the idea of God is innate, "that does not mean," as Dr. Pope remarks, "that the full knowledge of God is formed in every mind as an object of consciousness, but that the constitution of human nature is such that it naturally develops a consciousness of God, even as it becomes conscious of self and of the outer world. This consciousness of God is morally perverted, even as the consciousness of self and of the outer world may be intellectually perverted by a false philosophy. It may assume a thousand forms, from the blind fetish of abject superstition, through all the varieties of polytheism up to Pantheism, or the materialistic theories that unwittingly make the eternal evolutions of unintelligent law into the very God they reject."¹

The living seed will grow even in the darkness and coldness of the cellar, but the product will be a blanched and sickly sprout, bearing only a faint resemblance to the perfect plant. But, let the living seed be surrounded by favorable conditions of soil and sunlight and heat and moisture, and then will be, "first the blade, then the ear; after that the full corn in the ear." The full corn in the ear has its origin in the seed, but the perfect development is due to favorable external surroundings; and, when we see the perfect grain, we praise the soil, the season,

¹ "Compendium of Christian Theology," page 110.

and the husbandman, as well as the seed. In like manner, the germ of moral truth, the innate idea of God, will grow in the darkness of heathendom, and in the coldness of a fatalistic philosophy, but the development will be deformed and imperfect, and must not be taken for the normal, healthy product. The deformity and imperfection must be attributed to the unfavorable and adverse surroundings in which the development takes place. That there is any development, under these circumstances, proves the vitality and vigor of the germ. But, bring the living man, with the germs of truth which the Creator has hidden in the soil of his nature, under the light and warmth of Divine revelation, and there is a beauty and maturity of development which proves that the germs are good, and that the revelation is also good and adapted to the germs. The living man, developed under the genial influence of revelation, is brought into highest, holiest, happiest maturity.

Just as the acceptance of the axioms of mathematics, as the data of consciousness, is necessary to the very existence of that science, but, being accepted, the science with its infinite analogies and harmonics, is its own demonstration; so, the innate idea of God, with its correlative ideas, fits into and harmonizes with the supernatural facts of revelation and the facts of natural science; and the result of the union is a temple of truth, "a grand cathedral," it has been called, "with divinely painted windows. Standing without you can see no glory, nor can possibly imagine any, but, standing within, every ray of light reveals a harmony of unspeakable splendor."¹ And, the Architect of this great temple is a personal God, unlimited in the exercise of His infinite perfections.

7. But, scientific materialism says that the uniformity of the laws of nature is inconsistent with the idea of an unlimited Deity. This is the substance of Hume's famous argument, which, though often refuted, has, in one form or another, been repeated to this day.

¹Quoted in "God-Man," by Dr. Townsend, page 324.

What effect the argument had upon the mind of the philosopher himself may be judged from the fact that he makes an admission which completely undermines it. "I own," he says, "there may possibly be miracles of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony." "But," he adds,—and in so doing reveals his atheistic bias, and the impossibility of his giving a candid hearing to the supernatural,—“should this miracle be ascribed to any new system of religion, men in all ages have been so imposed upon by ridiculous stories of that kind, that the very circumstance would be full proof of a cheat, and sufficient, with all men of sense, not only to make them reject the fact, but to reject it without further examination.”¹ That is to say, if God, exercising his personal liberty, should work a miracle in sport, simply to make men wonder, the philosopher could believe it! But, should the miracle have a high moral purpose, bearing upon the eternal destiny of man, the philosopher could not believe it! Because gold has often been counterfeited and a worthless article palmed off upon the credulous, therefore, the philosopher will throw away the gold and, at the same time, save the counterfeit!

Let us, however, examine the premise of the argument which asserts the uniformity of the laws of nature.

What is the character of this belief? Whence do we derive it? Is it compatible with the idea of an unlimited Deity? Or, is it only compatible with the idea of a Deity bound by the adamantine chains of the laws of nature?

Our belief in the uniformity of the laws of nature is of the character of an induction. But, an induction stated as a proposition is not universal. An induction is based on facts, and the array of facts may be amply sufficient for it as a basis of action, and yet we may be compelled, upon competent testimony, to admit facts which are contrary to the induction. The uniformity of the laws of nature, as a universal proposition, is false; as a particular proposition, admitting the possibility of facts which it does not include, it is true. There is, therefore, nothing incom-

¹ Hopkins' Evidences, pages 39, 40.

patible in the idea of a personal God, the Author of nature, Himself superior to nature, directing the general course of nature according to fixed laws, upon which we may depend in the general business of life, and yet, for particular purposes of His government, manifesting his personality and liberty in other ways than through these laws.

I conclude my remarks upon this division of the subject by expressing the conviction, that just as men, in the excavation of a mountain-tunnel, beginning their labor from either side, bye and bye meet in the centre and rejoice in the completion of a common purpose, so will the students of nature and the students of revelation, all eventually meet and join hands in the centre of the deepest mysteries of the universe. But, this happy result cannot be achieved "by any movement of thought which begins by denying or throwing into the background those spiritual principles which are the most deeply rooted and the most enduring of any that are in man."¹ It can only be achieved when all the students of nature use, as many do now, the eyes of the soul, as well as the eyes of the body, and, when in the spirit of the devout Kepler, they confess, "O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee!"

II. My second proposition is, that miracles are the necessary credentials of revelation, and are in harmony with the beneficent purposes of God in the general course of nature and in the work of redemption.

The fact of God, unlimited in the liberty of His infinite perfections, being granted, several conclusions naturally follow.

(1.) It follows, that the universe is not a ponderous machine which God has made and started in its revolutions and evolutions, and which now runs and regulates itself, without dependence upon His conserving and directing care.

(2.) It follows, that the Divine power and wisdom did not exhaust themselves in originating the system of nature, so that now the thing formed is greater than He who formed it.

¹ Culture and Religion, by Principal Shairp, Note V.

(3.) It follows, that the laws of nature are not forces "self-sustaining and self-evolving," as Baden Powell asserts; but, as Lionel Beale says, without God's will behind them, they are nothing more, in themselves, than a glove without a hand within it; that they are modes in which the Divine will exerts itself, and, like the laws upon our statute-books, are powerless, excepting as they are enforced by a competent executive.

(4.) It follows, that the Divine will is not limited to these modes of operation, and that for purposes entirely in harmony with the moral aspects of nature, God may manifest Himself in other ways than through the general course of nature.

(5.) It follows, also, as a reasonable expectation, that from the beginning, God did not intend the manifestation of "His eternal power and Godhead" which nature gives to be the only moral light which man should enjoy, but, that He intended, as the Scriptures aver, to make the revelation of Himself in other ways than through "the things which are made," coeval with man's creation.

1. Now, supposing His beneficence should design to gratify this reasonable expectation by a written revelation, which would open up to man his relations to the seen and the unseen, what would be the appropriate and necessary credentials of that revelation? By what method could it be made to come to man with authority, as the voice of God, demanding an attentive ear and an obedient heart? How could man be made to depend upon it, as authentic, and not to regard it as the product, wise or unwise, of the human intellect, coming to him with a merely human authority? When the Messenger proclaims, "Thus saith Jehovah," what sign shall he offer of his true messengership?

A supernatural revelation given to man, to open up his wide relationships, and thereby to mould his character and life, will, of necessity, contain truths upon a level with the human understanding, and capable of being verified by human experience. But, as the Infinite mind is greater than the finite, such a revelation must also be expected to contain truths which, to the finite

mind, are mysteries, above its power of full comprehension. If the simplest forms of existence around us present mysteries, which we acknowledge to be facts, although we cannot comprehend them, it is reasonable to believe that deeper mysteries are contained in the Creator Himself, and in His moral plans and purposes.

How, then, can the attention of man, whose faculties have been weakened by the love and practice of sin, be authoritatively called to the study and pursuit of those truths of revelation which are on the level of his understanding and experience? And, how can those deeper truths which pertain to the Godhead be so authenticated that we may confidently receive them as facts, though we cannot fathom them?

One of the mysteries of revelation is, God manifest in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ. This Divine incarnation had been predicted by a long succession of prophecies. But, owing to the bias of human ignorance and wickedness, the object of Jewish expectation was a very different person from the God-man of the Gospels. By what method will Jesus be able to destroy the false ideal of the Jew, and call attention to, and demonstrate, His claims to the fulfilment of prophetic promise, so that Jew and Gentile will acknowledge Him as God-incarnate, and heed the message which He brings from heaven?

It is very evident that the ordinary operations of God in nature are not the appropriate credentials of His Messenger. However convincing they may be of the Divine existence to one who makes them the subject of pious contemplation, they cannot be convincing of a supernatural revelation. The supernatural revelation must be authenticated by supernatural deeds. The Messenger who comes to us with a special message from God, must be specially endowed with the power of God, by which he may be able, as God is able, to produce results in harmony with His message, and without the use, as well as above the reach, of secondary causes. And, inasmuch as false messengers may simulate the true, the supernatural facts which authenticate the true Messenger, must be of a character which differentiates them, as

a whole, from false portents, and exalts them to a high ground, above the suspicion of the candid and unbiased mind.

Such is the character of the miracles of the Gospels. The application to them of Leslie's four rules for determining the truth of matters of fact in general, conclusively demonstrates their genuineness.

(1.) They were of such a nature that men's outward senses, their eyes, and ears, and taste were judges of the facts.

(2.) They were done openly in the presence of multitudes. The Jewish Talmud admits the facts, though it ascribes them to magic, the art of which Jesus is said to have learned in Egypt. I do not know that the facts, as a whole, have ever been called in question, excepting to meet the emergencies of infidelity, so well established are they.

(3.) Public memorials and actions have perpetuated the memory of them in the world.

(4.) These public memorials originated at the time when the matters of fact were performed. The Christian Church, beginning at Pentecost, within fifty days of the tragedy of the Cross, and, quickly reaching out its arms to embrace the world, is, in all its institutions, and in all its history, a guarantee of the genuineness of the Gospel facts.

Strauss himself acknowledges that the Gospel narratives must have existed, substantially as they now are, previously to the destruction of Jerusalem, or, about thirty years after the ascension of Jesus,—a period far too brief for the development of myths, and in which they would have been testified against by many eye-witnesses of the real transactions which were falsified by them.

It will be well, too, to consider the alternative to which we are driven by the supposition that the Evangelists were deceivers, who imposed upon the world, within thirty years of their Master's death such a unique and consistent fraud. This alternative is forcibly put by Dr. Hill in his "Lecture on Divinity." "If, notwithstanding every appearance of truth, you suppose their testimony to be false, inexplicable circumstances of glaring ab-

surdity crowd upon you. You must suppose that twelve men, of mean birth, living in that humble station which placed ambitious views out of their reach, and far from their thoughts, without any aid from the State, formed the noblest scheme which ever entered the mind of man, adopted the most daring means of executing it, and conducted it with such address as to conceal the imposture under the semblance of simplicity and virtue. You must suppose that men, guilty of blasphemy and falsehood, united in an attempt, the best contrived, and which has in fact proved the most successful, for making the world virtuous; that they formed this singular enterprise without seeking any advantage to themselves, with an avowed contempt of honor and profit, and, with the certain expectation of scorn and persecution; that although conscious of one another's villainy, none of them ever thought of his own security by disclosing the fraud; but, that amid sufferings the most grievous to flesh and blood, they persevered in their conspiracy to cheat the world into piety, honesty and benevolence. . . . Truly, they who can swallow such suppositions, have no title to object to miracles!"¹

"History more than once has shown," says Canon Farrar, "that the border lands of atheism reach to the confines of a strange credulity."²

2. Another fact deserves attentive consideration. The supernatural signs which Jesus offered as credentials of His mission were not "violations" of the laws of nature. They were distinct from the secondary processes of nature, but, in entire accord with them in their beneficent operations and results.

If the providence of God, working through the agencies of sunshine and soil, and the toil of the laborious husbandman, provides food for the hungry, is it not in harmony with this beneficence, that Jesus, in order to meet an emergency of hunger, occasioned by His attractive influence upon the people, miraculously multiplied the five barley loaves and two small fishes, so

¹ Dr. George Hill's "Lecture on Divinity," pages 47, 48.

² Life and Work of St. Paul, chapter xvi.

as to afford an adequate supply for the needs of five thousand? If the skilful physician, by his knowledge of the medicinal properties of various herbs and minerals, is able to assist nature to throw off disease, and to turn away the hand of death, is it not in harmony with this endeavor that Jesus, by an omnific word or touch, and in one painless moment, did that which nature does by slow processes, and through prolonged weakness and distress? If sympathy with those who mourn over their dead is an instinct of the human heart, which shows itself in such deeds of kindness as are within the limits of the human faculty, is it not in harmony with this instinct of nature, that He who came from God, manifested His sympathy with the mourners by such deeds of restoration from the dead as His Divine faculties enabled Him to accomplish?

Once only during His ministry, did Jesus perform a miracle, which, upon the face of it, is harsh and severe; namely, when He caused the fruitless fig-tree quickly to dry up from the roots. But this miracle, performed, not upon a feeling man, but upon an unfeeling fig-tree, also harmonizes with nature, which has a voice of severity and justice, as well as of benevolence and love. And, the needful lesson which the miracle of which we are speaking so impressively conveys,—Jesus' condemnation of a fruitless profession of faith in God,—vindicates His moral purity from the charge of unholy passion, and points to the symbolism of the miracles in general, which will be considered in another place.

3. It needs also to be remarked, in order to correct a prevalent error, that the supernatural works of God are not greater, in themselves, than His ordinary operations in the general course of nature.

It requires no higher endowments of power and wisdom to perform any of the miracles of the Bible than to perform any of the works of Providence which are daily wrought before our eyes. It needed Omnipotence to change the water into the wine of the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee, but it no less requires Omnipotence to cause the vines upon the hill-side to produce the

rich clusters from which the wine is pressed. It required Omnipotence to perform the miracle of the loaves and fishes, but it no less needs Omnipotence to cause the seed sown in the earth by the hand of industrious man to germinate and multiply into an abundant harvest. It required Omnipotence to cause the sightless eye-balls of Bartimeus to drink in the light, but no less does it need Omnipotence to originate and preserve the adaptation of the organ to the medium of sight. It required Omnipotence to raise the dead Lazarus from the sepulchre, but no less does it require Omnipotence to preserve the living, and to keep the complicated mechanism of the human system in harmonious operation. The faculties which are competent to the performance of the one class of works are equally competent to the performance of the other.

4. If, now, we examine the terms by which the miracles are designated in the Gospels, we will find that they prove the purpose of the miracles as the credentials of revelation, and also suggest other valuable ends they serve in the economy of redemption.

One term applied to them in the Gospels is *teras*, a wonder, something distinct from ordinary phenomena, something which attracts attention and creates astonishment. It is, however, to be carefully noted, that while the Evangelists tell us that this term was used by the people in speaking of the mighty works of Jesus, they never use it as expressing their own conception of these events. The masses of the people, ignorant of their real nature, or, not anxious to distinguish their real nature, saw in them the marvelous, and applied to them a name which did not differentiate them from the ordinary marvelous. But the Evangelists, understanding their true significance, do not place them upon such a level. The Evangelists chiefly use three terms, which lead us on, step by step, to a true conception of the miracles, and of their right place and uses in revelation.

(1.) One of these terms is *dunameis*, i. e., powers, capabilities, faculties.

Every class of beings has its peculiar faculties, suited to its sphere, and fitting it to fulfil its special functions. Man has powers and faculties which operate in the line of the laws of nature. The results are seen in the arts and sciences, which have so materially changed the outward aspect of the world, and so largely contributed to human comfort and well-being. God, also, has special powers and faculties, suited to His sphere, qualifying Him to create the universe and sit upon its throne; powers and faculties which operate through secondary causes, and in other methods which, to the limited faculties of man, are impossible. Jesus, as a Teacher sent from God, possessed these Divine faculties, and used them in the interests of His mission to the world. "The healing of the sick, the giving sight to the blind, the raising of the dead,—things entirely beyond the range of our powers, yet lay entirely within the compass of our Lord's capacities, and were in accordance with the laws of His nature."

(2.) The second term is *erga*, works. As the finite faculties of man manifest themselves in works, so do the faculties of God. But, His works are superior to those of man, as His faculties are superior to those of man. Jesus, possessing these faculties of God, performed the works of God. When questioned concerning the cure of the impotent man, at the pool of Bethesda, upon the Sabbath, he said, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work."¹ The faculties of God exercised upon the Sabbath in the ordinary works of nature were the justification which He offered for the special exercise of these faculties upon the Sabbath, in the work of mercy wrought upon this suffering man. Again, He said, "If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." In seeing Him, they had seen His Father. He was God visible to man, and in rejecting His works, they were rejecting God's works, because God's attributes were manifest in Him.

3. The third of the terms referred to is *semeia*, i. e., signs, symbols.

¹ John v. 17, Revised Version.

The *faculties* of God, making themselves manifest in the supernatural *works* of Jesus, were not without a grand purpose; they were signs and symbols,—*signs*, that He through whom God works is His messenger, authorized to speak in His name; and *symbols* of the truths themselves.

(a.) The most prominent meaning of *semeia* is *signs*. We therefore notice, first, that the miracles of Jesus were *signs* of His authority to speak to man in the name of God.

The first miracle which He wrought is said to be the “beginning of His *signs*,” by which He manifested forth His glory.¹ Nicodemus, expressing his own opinion, and that of other candid persons, said, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these *signs* that thou doest, except God be with him.”² John closes his Gospel by saying, “Many other *signs* truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life through His name.”³

Respecting the doctrine of the union in Himself of the Divine and human nature, Jesus taught that His own verbal testimony was a sufficient guarantee of its truth, but, that if any regarded that testimony as insufficient of itself, they should believe the doctrine on the testimony of His works. “Believe me,” he said, “that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or, else, believe me for the very works’ sake.”⁴

Respecting those doctrines which are on the level of human experience, He assured the people, that if they would do the will of God, as made known by Him, they would have in their own consciousness a demonstration of their Divine origin and adaptation to the soul’s needs. “If any man willeth to do His will,” He said, “he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”⁵ But in regard to these knowable doctrines, He also taught, that they who had not done the will of God, as revealed by Him, and therefore did not possess

¹ John ii. 11, Revised Version.

² John iii. 2.

³ John xx. 30.

⁴ John xiv. 11.

⁵ John vii. 17.

the inward, experimental evidences of the truth of His teaching, should likewise see in the miracles convincing signs of His veracity, as the Messenger of God, and be led thereby to accept and practice the truth.

This relation between the doctrine, and the miracle as the sign of the doctrine, is distinctly shown in the remarks made concerning the cure of the palsied man, who was let down through the roof into the presence of Jesus. "Jesus, seeing their faith, saith unto the sick of the palsy, 'Son, thy sins are forgiven.'" The unbelieving Scribes who heard Him speak, said in their hearts, "Why doth this man thus speak? He blasphemeth; who can forgive sins, but one, even God?" Jesus knew their thoughts, and He undertook to demonstrate to them the reality of his possession of the Divine prerogative of the forgiveness of sins. He put to them this question, "Whether is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise and take up thy bed and walk?" The answer, had they given it, could only be,—“They are both, alike, outside the reach of human power; they are both alike the work of God. The possession of the power and authority to do the one, is proof of the possession of the power and authority to do the other.” Jesus anticipated this answer, and proceeded to perform before their eyes the visible miracle of the healing of the body, as a sign of the invisible miracle of grace, the forgiveness of this man's sins. In order to convince them that He exercised on earth the Divine prerogative of the forgiveness of sins, He, by a word, restored the palsied man to health. "But that ye may know," He said, "that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, He saith to the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house. And he arose, and straightway took up his bed, and went forth before them all."¹

(b.) We notice also, that the miracles of Jesus were *symbols* of the truths of which they were the credentials. This, I said, is another meaning of the word, *semēia*.

¹ Matt. ix. 1-8; Mark ii. 1-12; Luke v. 17-26.

Revelation abounds in symbols; object-lessons we call them, intended to assist our understanding and our faith.

The Mosaic dispensation, in the leading features of its history, its rites and ceremonies, its temple and priesthood, is a grand and impressive symbol, or series of symbols. The holy prophets delighted in symbols when predicting the triumphs of the Gospel day. Isaiah, speaking symbolically, of the spiritual benefits of the reign of the Messiah, as well as literally, of the Divine works he would perform, said, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing."¹

The New Testament also has its symbols. The common things of every day experience were made, by the Great Teacher, to speak loudly of the deepest spiritual truths. The world of nature, to His eye, was a vast mirror, as it were, reflecting in every part Divine and heavenly realities. The sacraments of Christianity, of perpetual obligation, are perpetual symbols of spiritual things. The parables are further illustrations of this feature of revelation. And, the miracles are "acted parables." We see in them the movement of Omnipotence, triumphing over the physical ills of humanity; we see in them also illustrations of the Divine methods of the cure of the spiritual ills of humanity.

They are, therefore, to be regarded as parts of the revelation which it was the mission of Jesus to communicate, as well as its necessary credentials. Instead of being blots and disfigurements upon an otherwise perfect record, as they have often been represented, they lend their own light and glory to the inimitable character and words of Him who spake as never man spake.

"Jesus Christ," says Dr. Taylor, "came to earth to work the great miracle of man's redemption. That was his dominating aim; but, in moving toward that, He gave, out of His benevolence, and as a kind of alms to those around Him, the minor

¹ Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.

miracles of which the Gospel has preserved the record; and each of these is, in its own department, and from its own angle, a miniature of one great miracle which He is continually working in the regeneration of the human soul. . . . Each of them is patterned after some aspect of His great mediatorial and redemptive work, and by studying them all, we may come to a better apprehension both of it and Him."¹

Upon this point, I quote also the words of Canon Wescott,—the miracles "are presented to us as a revelation of hope, of forgiveness, of restoration; of hope, as wrought in an age of signal distress; of restoration, in the universality of their extent; of forgiveness, in the spiritual antetypes of their working. And if we take this larger view of their essential nature, I do not see how we can conceive of a Divine Saviour without such deeds of love. A gospel without miracles, would be, if I may use the image, like a church without sacraments. The outward pledge of the spiritual gift would be wanting."²

An examination of the miracles, under the guidance of a skilful expositor, will show in how many points they touch and illumine the deep problems of the spiritual life, illustrating them by the analogy of earthly things; and doing so in a better manner than words alone could do; just as the picture of an object may enable us to form a clearer perception of it than the best verbal description.

5. Without entering upon the question of the comparative value of miracles to those who witnessed them, and to ourselves who receive them upon historic testimony, it will be seen from the line of argument pursued, that their use and value are by no means limited to any one period of Christian history; and this will be further evident from several additional considerations to which, in closing, I will allude.

(1.) Miracles are standing witnesses to every age of the reality of the supernatural.

¹ "The Gospel Miracles, etc.," page 210.

² "Characteristics of the Gospel Miracles, pages 43, 44.

If the long chain of secondary causes had never, in the history of men, been interrupted; if no supernatural deed had ever broken in upon the routine of the laws of nature; if no demonstration had ever been furnished of the watchful activity of One to whom nature is subordinate; if Jesus, claiming all power in heaven and in earth, had furnished no tangible evidence of its possession, infidelity would no doubt point triumphantly to the absence of demonstration as the proof of its impossibility, and "faith would find no way opened to the 'world to come.'"

Upon this point, Trench speaks as follows: "If in one sense the orderly workings of nature reveal the glory of God (Ps. xix. 1-6), in another, they hide that glory from our eyes; if they ought to make us continually to remember Him, yet there is danger that they lead us to forget Him, until the world around us shall prove,—not a translucent medium, through which we look to Him, but, a thick impenetrable veil, concealing Him wholly from our sight. Were there no other purpose in the miracles than this, namely, to testify the liberty of God, which, however it habitually shows itself in nature, is yet more than and above nature; were it only to break a link in that chain of cause and effect, which else we should come to regard as itself God, as the iron chain of an inexorable necessity, binding heaven no less than earth, they would serve a great purpose, they would not have been wrought in vain."¹

The miracles accomplish this purpose. They are voices, saying to anti-supernaturalism in all its forms,

"There are more things in heaven and earth,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

They are the visible touches of the invisible hand of Him who fills immensity and comprehends eternity, tokens of His complete ability to fulfil all the promises, and all the righteous judgments of His word.

(2.) Miracles are fundamental in the system of Christian doctrine, as entertained by the great body of Christians in every age, and their elimination would be the destruction of that system.

¹ Notes on the Miracles, page 24.

Look at Jesus Himself. What an amazing personage He is! Bushnell closes his very discriminating and suggestive analysis of the character and ministry of Jesus,—an analysis worthy of most careful study,—in these words: “Not to say that we are dissatisfied with this sketch, would be almost an irreverence of itself, to the subject of it. Who can satisfy himself with anything that he can say of Jesus Christ? We have seen how many pictures of the sacred person of Jesus by the first masters, but not one among them all that did not rebuke the weakness which could dare attempt an impossible subject. So of the character of Jesus. It is necessary for the holy interest of truth, that we should explain it, as we are best able; but what are human thoughts and human conceptions on a subject which dwarfs all thought, and immediately outgrows whatever is conceived? And yet, for the reason that we have failed, we seem also to have succeeded. For the more impossible it is found to be to grasp the character, and set it forth, the more clearly is it seen to be above our range, a miracle and a mystery.”¹

So prominent is the place in the world’s history which Jesus holds, that He cannot be ignored. He must in some way be accounted for. And how is He to be accounted for?

We have noticed the inconsistencies and absurdities to which naturalism is driven in its attempts to furnish an answer to this question. And, I cannot forbear to mention the recent remarkable confession of a prominent Unitarian minister of the perplexities of “Liberal Christianity,” in relation to Orthodoxy.

Dr. Ellis, addressing the Unitarian Club in Boston, said,—“Fifty years of study, thought, and reading, given largely to the Bible, and to the literature which peculiarly relates to it, have brought me to this conclusion, that the Book—taken with the especial Divine quality and character claimed for it, and so extensively assigned to it as inspired and infallible, as a whole, in all its contents—is an Orthodox book. It yields what is called the Orthodox creed. The vast majority of its readers, following its letter, its obvious sense, its natural meaning, and, yielding to

¹ “Nature and the Supernatural,” page 224.

the impression which some of its emphatic texts make upon them, find in it Orthodoxy. Only that kind of ingenious, special, discriminative, and—in candor, I must add—forced treatment which it receives from us Liberals, can make the Book teach anything but Orthodoxy.”¹

One of the doctrines of Orthodoxy is that of the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Orthodoxy explains or accounts for the superhuman wisdom and power of Jesus, by acknowledging him to be God-incarnate. It expresses itself in the Apostles’ Creed: “He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.” It regards it as impossible that He, in comparison with whom the wisest and best sages the centuries have ever produced, are nothing more than the planets in comparison with the sun; whose influence upon the world’s welfare has been increasing for eighteen hundred years, and is to-day more powerful than ever; whose teachings, regarded as a moral system, are the highest and best the world has ever seen; should so far depart from the standard He has Himself set up, as to advance claims which, if untrue, must convict Him of the boldest and basest hypocrisy and blasphemy.

It therefore accepts the explanation of Himself which He Himself gives, and which harmonizes with the testimony of prophets and apostles.

Jesus, with the full consciousness of pre-existence with God, “before the world was,”² says, “I came down from heaven;”³ “I came out from the Father, and am come into the world;”⁴ and when many of His disciples hesitated to believe His word, He said, “Doth this cause you to stumble? What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where He was before?”⁵

Here, then, in our endeavor to account for the Lord Jesus, we are at once met with the miracle of the incarnation. Jesus is a supernatural being, the God-man. “The Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His

¹ Address, delivered November 8, 1882.

² John xvii. 5.

³ John vi. 38.

⁴ John xvi. 28.

⁵ John vi. 62.

glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.”¹

This miracle of the God-man is of primary importance in the system of Christian truth. It is the foundation of the doctrines of grace. Denying this miracle, Christianity is, at best, a moral system, opening up by precept the way of duty. But, admitting this miracle, Christianity is more than the best system of morals. It does what no mere system of morals can possibly do. It provides for man, in the vicarious and propitiatory sacrifice of the God-man upon the cross, supernatural help by which he may be delivered from the love of sin, and assisted to do the will of God with joyful heart. It offers to renew his nature by a spiritual regeneration, and by supernatural gifts and endowments—his own will consenting—to lift him up “unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”²

(3.) Miracles are pledges of the fulfilment of revelation respecting special manifestations of Divine power which are yet to be made in the history of redemption.

The conflict between good and evil, at present raging in the world, will not always continue. It is to be terminated, according to revelation, in the everlasting victory of the good, and the subjugation and separation of the evil. This probationary life is to be succeeded by an eternal state of rewards and penalties, meted out by Him whose omniscience is a guarantee of infallible rectitude. The corruptible bodies of unnumbered generations, mouldering into dust, are to be raised up, preparatory to the final judgment-scenes. The bodies of the just, reanimated and glorified, are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and to be forever with Him. The highest Christian hopes are centred in a complete deliverance from the influences of evil, and the vision of God, in a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwell eth righteousness.

Upon what foundation do these hopes rest? What is the guarantee of their fulfilment? They rest upon the word of God,

¹ John i. 1, 2, 14.

² Ephesians iv. 14, Revised Version.

illustrated and confirmed by miracles, especially by the crowning miracles of all, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and His ascension into heaven.

"I have been used," said Dr. Arnold to the Rugby students, "for many years to study the history of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair enquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us, that Christ died and rose again from the dead."¹

Jesus is risen from the dead, and ascended to heaven! This is the earnest of our Christian hopes. This is the pledge which God has given to us of the final glorification of all those to whom the Gospel comes, not "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."²

"Then, then, I rose; then first humanity
Triumphant passed the crystal ports of light,
(Stupendous guest!) and seized eternal youth,
Seized in our name."³

For, "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you."⁴

¹ Sermons on Christian Life, pages 13, 14.

² 1 Thess. i. 5.

³ Young's Night Thoughts, page 44.

⁴ Rom. viii. 11, Revised Version.